

The World

Anti-U.S. Feelings

Amid Glamor of the Games, Korea Sees Warts on an Ally

By SUSAN CHIRA

WHILE the world has been watching South Korea during the Olympic Games, Koreans have been staring back — alternately riveted, charmed and disgusted by the encounter. The Seoul Olympics is an invasion by invitation, offering this insular nation a chance to inspect foreigners of many nationalities — not only familiar ones like Americans and Japanese but also new ones like the Russians and other Eastern Europeans. In the process, Koreans are discovering that old enemies can be beguiling and close friends can disappoint.

For most of South Korea's 40-year history as a separate nation, its citizens have been taught to see the world

as black and white, with Communism the root of all evil and the United States the font of benevolence. Under generations of authoritarian rule and rigid censorship, South Koreans had little access to alternative views.

All contact with Communist nations was banned; Koreans urging rapprochement were branded as sedition. But the Government, prodded by a public eager to draw closer to North Korea and conscious of a thaw in ideological rivalries between the superpowers, has toned down its rhetoric and sought to expand ties with the Communist bloc.

Now the Korean public is basking in a rush of attention from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. "We've been conditioned to think in one way about the Eastern bloc," said Shin Il-do Sun, a 34-year-old housewife who is one of many South Koreans struck by the sudden change in attitude. "Now we have a chance to see for ourselves."

Soviet, Eastern bloc and Chinese officials, allowed in Seoul for the first time in decades, have been meeting with officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And Korean newspapers have been feverishly speculating about the possibility that the Soviet Union and South Korea, which have no diplomatic relations, will establish reciprocal trade offices.

As part of Mikhail S. Gorbachev's diplomatic overtures to Asia, the Soviets and Eastern Europeans also went on a cultural offensive, sending over some of their best performers for an Olympics arts festival that had few American counterparts that had few American counterparts that had few American counterparts.

Korean audiences cried and cheered when two Korean-Soviet sopranos performed with the Mexico Rada Choir and when the Moscow Philharmonic Orchestra played "Hand in Hand," the Seoul Olympic theme song. Students clamored for admission to Soviet and Eastern European



Some South Koreans were offended by American high spirits during the march into the Olympic stadium in the opening ceremony.

films that critics would have banned only a few months ago.

Curious shoppers flocked to "Russia Week" at the huge Lotte Department Store, snapping up sets of Russian Olympic jigs — including one with the Soviet and South Korean flags side by side — and inspecting Soviet-made porcelain and riveted wooden dolls.

While the Soviet and Eastern European newcomers have assiduously wooed the Koreans, Americans have mustered to alienate their hosts. On opening day of the Olympics, many American athletes broke out of the neat formation of the other marching athletes, waving at

cameras, holding up signs and generally displaying what Americans think of as high spirits and what Koreans saw as rudeness. By contrast, the Soviet athletes marched with military precision; the Dutch opened orange umbrellas thoughtfully lettered in the Korean alphabet; even the Japanese carried Roses of Sharon, the Korean national flower, which the Japanese occupation force had tried to root out during its 35-year occupation of this country.

Charges of Bias

The American-Korean relationship continued to sour when NBC filmed an ugly boxing brawl, which appeared in Korea on the American military television station. Koreans pounced on the network — and by extension the United States — complaining of biased reporting. Ruling party politicians and senior Olympic officials criticized NBC, helping to touch off a storm of anti-American sentiment. Koreans fumed when two American swimmers stole a lion's head statue from a Seoul hotel and an American runner kicked a taxi door. Editorials blasted Americans for rudeness and arrogance. Crowds took to booing American teams and cheering their rivals, whoever they were.

Part of the disenchantment with Americans comes from the strains of familiarity, as well as from a sense that a nation that can be host to the Olympics deserves to be on a more equal footing with other countries.

"Americans don't pay us any respect," said I. B. Chung, a 41-year-old bank employee. "The Europeans see Korean and Oriental culture with interested eyes and the Americans don't."

Alarmed by the wave of anti-Americanism, a number of political leaders from the Prime Minister to members of the opposition belatedly tried to douse the flames that some of them had helped to light. Warning of the dangers of emotionalism, they asked South Koreans to recall that the United States is their nation's closest ally and military protector.

"We shouldn't let feelings damage a relationship that is very important to our security," said a foreign ministry official. "I hope this passes soon. Our traditional close relationship is still as it was."

The Korean infatuation with the Soviets and Eastern Europeans comes partly from the charm of novelty and the lure of the once-forbidden. But many Koreans say that the old wariness remains.

"That doesn't mean we are instant friends," Mrs. Shin said. "Now we can see something we haven't been able to see in the past. I can be more critical. We are a democratic country and so we have a wall between us and the Eastern bloc. America is still our ally."

Verbatim: Winning the Future

"The progress of the European Community is one of the promising world trends. By creating a community of 12 European democracies, we won a victory over national egoism, power-political thinking and prejudice. It is the greatest and finest victory in the history of Europe. It has not cost one single human life, yet it is winning us the future."

Hans-Dietrich Genscher
Foreign Minister of West Germany,
addressing the United Nations General Assembly